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SIPDIS

DEPARTMENT FOR AF/W, AF/RSA, INR/AF

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TAGS: [PRL](#) [PBTS](#) [PU](#) [SG](#)

SUBJECT: BORDER TENSIONS BETWEEN SENEGAL AND GUINEA-BISSAU

REF: AMBASSADOR MARCIA S. BERNICAT FOR REASONS 1.5 B/D.

11. (SBU) Summary: Tension is growing along the border between Guinea-Bissau and Senegal, although both governments insist there is no conflict. Nevertheless, there is a dispute over the use of land near the tourist area of Cap Skiring in a place called Cap Roxo. The Senegalese were a no-show at a meeting the GOGB had proposed take place on October 22, but the two sides are scheduled to meet on October 24. In the interim, the GOGB has sent approximately 700 soldiers to reinforce its armed forces near the border. End summary.

12. (SBU) In spite of several public comments from Guinea-Bissau President Malam Bacai Sanha, and the personal assurances of newly appointed Senegalese Minister of Foreign Affairs Madicke Niang to the Ambassador that the border dispute between Senegal and Guinea-Bissau is much ado about nothing, tension is growing along the border between the two countries. Numerous press reports and Embassy contacts confirm that the Bissau-Guinean armed forces have been sent to the border area as a result of a dispute involving land that belongs to Guinea-Bissau, but has long been cultivated by Senegalese peasants. According to numerous sources, the proximate cause of the dispute revolves around plans by Belgian investors to build a hotel on a small piece of land on the coast near the tourist destination of Cap Skiring in Senegal (home to a temporarily closed Club Med resort). The area, known as Cap Roxo (or Cabo Roxo), is more easily accessible from the Senegalese side of the border, somewhat analogous to the relationship of Baja California to the rest of Mexico.

13. (SBU) Ostensibly, Senegalese cultivation of the land was not a problem due to the cross-border family and ethnic ties of the people in the area. In spite of this habitual land use, the central government of Senegal agrees that the land in question belongs to Guinea-Bissau, according to Foreign Minister Niang comments to the Ambassador and PolCouns on October 19. He and his Chief of Staff, Ambassador Mankeur Ndiaye, assured the Ambassador that there was no dispute, with the Minister going as far as to say, "These Senegalese are wrong." However, local Senegalese (it is not clear who) reportedly gave authorization to the Belgian developers to build a hotel. As a result, the local Bissau-Guinean provincial governor reportedly went to Cap Roxo to reassert his country's sovereignty. (Note: Some sources have made the conflicting claim the problem is actually that Senegalese peasants, who have cultivated the fields in this area for generations, object to Bissau-Guinean authorities permitting investors from building a hotel on the land in question. End note.)

14. (C) Miguel Sousa, a Portuguese political officer serving

in the European Union (EU) Security Sector Reform (SSR) Mission in Guinea-Bissau, told Political Counselor that he had been informed by senior Bissau-Guinean officers that their government deployed approximately 700 troops near the border. Sousa said newly confirmed Armed Forces Chief of Staff Naval Captain Zamora Induta personally oversaw the assembling of troops in the town of Sao Vincente in the north of Guinea-Bissau, organized a parade and gave a speech explaining to them that their duty as soldiers was to protect the motherland. As a result of this buildup, Bissau-Guineans in the area reportedly fled south into their country and Senegalese in the area moved north into theirs. In addition, Guinea-Bissau has reportedly begun controlling the border, inspecting people's travel documents and, in some cases, detaining people.

15. (C) On the Senegalese side of the border, a USAID locally employed staff member and his German development cooperation counterpart both reported a significant rise in tension in the Casamance capital of Ziguinchor. Underscoring the level of concern, both commented that people in Ziguinchor were more worried about the emerging border dispute than the recent escalation in violence between the Movement of Democratic Forces in the Casamance. However, in spite of this tension, Embassy sources report that the GOS has not ordered an increase in the number of troops in the Casamance.

(Comment: It is worth noting that there is already a contingent of 2,500 to 3,000 Senegalese troops in the region due to the ongoing conflict with the separatist MFDC movement. Moreover, Senegal's forces are already stretched thin due to peacekeeping deployments and the additional

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deployment of forces along the border with Guinea (Conakry).
End comment.)

Senegalese and Bissau-Guinean Governments in Talks

16. (SBU) Both governments have been at pains to insist that there is no dispute over the demarcation. Bissau-Guinean Defense Minister Artur da Silva visited Dakar on October 14 in an attempt to quickly resolve the matter. However, the governors of the Kolda and Casamance regions of Senegal failed to meet their GOSB counterparts on October 22 in the town of Sao Domingo in Guinea-Bissau to discuss the issue. The Embassy was told the GOS representatives did not attend the meeting because the GOSB proposed the date and location for the encounter, but did not bother to wait for a confirmation. Consequently, the two sides were scheduled to meet in Bissau on October 24.

There's More at Stake than Farms and a Hotel

17. (SBU) There is another element to the border dispute. Guinea-Bissau has sued Senegal twice in the International Court of Justice over the demarcation of the maritime boundary. At stake are the rights to oil offshore. Apparently the exact demarcation of the border in Cap Roxo could have a significant impact on determining the share to which either country is entitled.

18. (C) Comment: While Senegal heretofore has not appeared to take the dispute very seriously, it is clear that the Bissau-Guineans do. While the prospect of armed conflict between the two armed forces seems to be low, there is a risk nonetheless given the heightened state of alert and ongoing operations of the Senegalese armed forces against a recently resurgent MFDC. To wit, on the same day that the two countries, governors were supposed to meet in Sao Domingo, the Senegalese army engaged MFDC rebels not far away just south of Ziguinchor. Moreover, if it turns out that Bissau-Guinean army deserters have taken up arms with MFDC rebels as has been alleged (septel), the scope for tensions potentially boiling over into something more violent would

